



Testimony in Support of SB 572 A with -5 amendment

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House Health Care Committee

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Oregon Nurses Association

Chair Greenlick and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) in support of SB 572 A with the -5 amendment.

The -5 amendment strengthens the bill and brings it in line with evidence-based best practices as well as emerging national standards. The -5 amendment provides for a safe patient handling committee that will include workers who perform lifting tasks, including nurses. The amendment also appropriately identifies the role of the registered nurse in assessing and planning for each patient's safe handling needs.

This is consistent with work ONA has done in partnership with a number of hospitals around the state. In fact, many facilities have already implemented programs similar to the one described in the amendment. Our hope is that this legislation will accelerate progress and help reduce the high incidence of lift injuries in nurses and other health care workers.

Safe patient handling is an important workplace safety issue for Oregon's nurses, and work-related musculoskeletal disorders are a significant occupational health problem in nursing and other health care positions. A 2011 American Nurses Association survey revealed that 80 percent of nurses have worked despite frequent musculoskeletal pain and, according to the US Department of Labor, nurses consistently rank in the top 10 occupations most susceptible to overexertion injuries. Registered nurses and nursing assistants, along with laborers, janitors/cleaners, heavy truck drivers and stock clerks accounted for more than a quarter of the United State's occupational musculoskeletal disorders in 2011, and health care injuries are estimated to be severely underreported.

Many of these musculoskeletal injuries are caused by repeated lifting and transferring of patients. These injuries can be devastating for nurses and other health care workers. Chronic back pain is common. These injuries often require time off work, transfer to a different unit, and in some cases, leaving nursing entirely.

As patients become heavier, taking steps to mitigate the dangers of patient lifting and utilize appropriate equipment is increasingly important for both health care workers and our economy.

In 2008, direct and indirect costs associated with back injuries to health care workers cost the US \$7.4 billion. In Oregon, health care workers suffer as one of the top three occupations filing Workers' Compensation claims as of 2011.

Health care facilities that incorporate safe patient handling programs like the one described in the -5 amendment, see decreases in musculoskeletal injuries to nurse and health care workers, as well as increased savings and improved patient comfort and safety.

SB 572 A with the -5 amendment will improve working conditions for nurses and health care workers, patient care and overall efficiency.

ONA urges you to support SB 572 A with the -5 amendments.